

“Effects of Powerful Resurrection Testimony”

Acts 4:32-35 NIV

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

⁽³³⁾ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

⁽³⁴⁾ There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ⁽³⁵⁾ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

“³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.”

Today's text evokes timely subjects.

First, because God's people shared with one another, some think Acts 4:32 teaches a form of socialism or communism.

Do they have reason to conclude that?

Chapter 5 includes an example of sharing that we'll discuss next week, the Lord willing.

Acts 4: 33 reminds us of a more vital subject: “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus...”

Suppose someone asked you today:

“How strongly do you believe in Jesus's resurrection?

**10 being very strong,
1 not very strong?”**

How would you rate your belief that Jesus actually came back from the dead on the 3rd day?

“How strongly do you believe that Jesus will raise you on Judgment Day? Next, consider your lifestyle.

Do your habits, interests, and budget show that you believe that Jesus arose from death?

W.Y. Fullerton climbed the mimic Calvary in Domodossola, Italy.

A series of chapels ascends in order up a hillside.

In a way, they resemble the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem.

Each chapel at Domodossola has terra cotta figures depicting a scene of Jesus' passion.

- **Jesus before Pilate,**
- **Jesus shouldering the cross,**
- **Others show Jesus on his way to Calvary.**
- **A chapel shows Jesus hanging on the cross.**

The feet of countless pilgrims made a well-worn path between the shrines.



Thousands of worshipers come to look at the images of Jesus’ suffering, agony, and death.

A narrower, much-less-worn path continued up the hill.

It was almost fully grass-covered because hardly anyone walked it.

Fullerton followed it to the top of the hill where he found the chapel of the resurrection.

Few took the trouble to visit it.

Those who built the mimic Calvary didn’t forget that Jesus rose from the tomb.

It seemed, though, that most of the pilgrims came only to see a Christ who was dead.

James S. Stewart observed,

“This broken, warring world is living on the wrong side of Easter day.”

That fact is a major source of our troubles.

Recall the concerned women, who went to Jesus’ tomb early Sunday morning hoping to add burial spices.

Prior to their arrival, a violent earthquake shook the area.

An angel descended, rolled back the huge stone at the entrance, sat on it, and greeted the women.

The angel said to the women: **“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who**

was crucified. (6) He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.”

We’re stuck where the disciples and the women were—between Good Friday and the Resurrection.



Why do we stay on the dark side of the resurrection?

1. We mostly live and act as though Jesus hadn’t been raised.

• We worry and fret pitifully.

• We run from one false hope to another.

• Hate, destruction, and injustice depress us.

Was Jesus raised from the dead?

Jesus’ disciples didn’t think so at first.

But after he proved himself alive in numerous ways for forty days, they no longer doubted.

You might protest:

“You expect that from people with whom Jesus spent so much time.”

But you don’t expect 12 cowardly men to become unshakably bold.

How also do you explain the conversion of Jesus’ skeptical enemies?

Consider Saul of Tarsus.

His life-change came about because he saw the risen Jesus and he saw first-hand the boldness of those who witnessed to Jesus’ resurrection.

Many prominent folks change their religion.
Those shifts often improve their status or wealth.
Some marry out of their religion to:

- to become citizens of a different country;
- or because of the attractiveness of their mate.

Think of what happened to Saul-Paul after he believed in Jesus’ resurrection:

Beforehand, his family seemed already comfortable and influential.

As a young man, Saul attained prestige and standing.

But he gave up his trendy job and its status.

He went from being Saul, the prosecutor to Paul, the jailbird.



They put Paul on the JBI’s *Most Wanted List*.

In case you wonder about the JBI: I refer to the Jewish Bureau of Investigation.

Between the JBI and the Roman Bureau, he was beaten, flogged, stoned, starved, shipwrecked, chained, and humiliated.

All because he believed in Jesus’ resurrection.

How do you explain Paul’s conversion unless he saw Jesus alive and saw the faith of Christians?

All 12 Apostles, Jesus own brothers, James and Jude, and late-comer Apostle Paul, steadfastly believed.

All risked their lives to affirm Jesus’ resurrection.

At the same time, they were happier than kids who’ve just won the Annual Easter Egg hunt. You sense Peter’s excited joy when he wrote:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

“⁶In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy . . .”¹

The fact that 500 persons witnessed Jesus’ resurrection really impressed the Apostle Paul.

¹ 1 Peter 1:3-8 NIV

It’s as if he promised he’d supply their phone numbers and email addresses if anyone doubted.²

Those witnesses underwent fierce opposition--greater than we experience.

2. **For them resurrection wasn’t a one day out of 365 springtime celebration. God’s people constantly believed it, remembered it, and talked about it. They faithfully thought about resurrection at their weekly communion observances.**



“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”³

My dad died December 1, 1969.

Before he died, he and my mother came to visit us several times in California. He and I sometimes took walks together; something we never did when I was young. I think of him often. After December 1969, I never expected a call or a note from dad saying that he would be coming again to visit us. My mother lived several more years and did visit us.

When we remember Jesus in communion, we look forward to his coming because he is alive and he will return from God’s right hand on Judgment day.

What will happen then?

² 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

³ 1 Corinthians 11:26 NASB

Jesus will do something no politician, scholar, ball player, actor, preacher or scientist could ever do.

He will judge everyone by God’s standards, and we shall be rewarded according to what we have done.

3. **There’s more good news today.**

Peter earlier said this to a large group in Jerusalem: You, “with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”⁴

The original reads much more strongly.

“Death could not hold him in its power.”

Think of all the graveyards in the world.

I’ve conducted funerals at some of the world’s biggest graveyards.

Death ended the life of all those in graves, at sea, and wherever.

Death totally prevailed at every place.

Death could not hold its power over Jesus.

He came out of his tomb.

People argue about the Book of Revelation.

Those who teach the Rapture and the Tribulation seem to miss Chapter 20’s great news:



Arlington National Cemetery

⁴ Acts 2:23, 24 NIV

“Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them . . .”

The first resurrection takes place when we are immersed into Christ and rise to live a new life, (Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:12, 3:1-17).

If you believe the Apostles’ testimony, repent of your wrongdoing, become one with Christ, and live for him, death will have no power over you either.

By his power, Jesus the Creator will raise you to life on that Last Day when he will raise and judge everyone.

And you will never have to fear, worry, or to cry hopelessly again.

“Ben Patterson wrote in *The Grand Essentials*: "I have a theory about old age.... I believe that when life has whittled us down, when joints have failed and skin has wrinkled and capillaries have clogged and hardened, what is left of us will be what we were all along, in our essence.

“Exhibit A is a distant uncle...All his life he did nothing but find new ways to get rich...He spent his senescence very comfortably, drooling and babbling constantly about the money he had made...When life whittled him down to his essence, all there was left

was raw greed. That is what he had cultivated in a thousand little ways over a lifetime.

"Exhibit B is my wife's grandmother...When she died in her mid-eighties, she had already been senile for several years. What did this lady talk about? The best example I can think of was when we asked her to pray before dinner. She would reach out and hold the hands of those sitting beside her, a broad, beatific smile would spread across her face, her dim eyes would fill with tears as she looked up to heaven, and her chin would quaver as she poured out her love to Jesus. That was Edna in a nutshell. She loved Jesus and she loved people. She couldn't remember our names, but she couldn't keep her hands from patting us lovingly whenever we got near her.

"When life whittled her down to her essence, all there was left was love: love for God and love for people."



Following the risen Christ results in love for God and love for people which will carry “Aunt Edna” and all like her into eternity after the resurrection.

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